

CLAIMS:

Having thus described our invention, what we claim as new, and desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. A method for real-time dynamic switching between a first service provider providing a service for users over a communications network and a second service provider, said method comprising the steps of:
 - a) establishing switching criterion for deciding when to switch service provision between said first service provider and second service provider;
 - b) monitoring said communications network for determining satisfaction of said switching criterion; and,
 - c) switching between first and second service provided over said communications network based on satisfaction of said switching criterion.
2. The method of claim 1, further including the steps of:
 - maintaining state information associated with said user's use of said service provided by said first service provider; and,
 - migrating any state information maintained up to the time of switching to said second service, wherein the switching occurs in a manner substantially transparent to the user.
3. The method of claim 1, further including the steps of:
 - establishing criterion for determining service fees to be charged by a switching service provider for providing said automatic switching; and,
 - communicating fee information to said user.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said switching step c) is performed automatically without user knowledge.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein said switching step c) is performed at behest of a user or, upon a user providing approval for the switch when a switching criterion is satisfied.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said user includes: an individual, or a group of individuals.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein said service provided to said users over a communications network includes a service provisioning one or more of: text, multimedia content, images, broadcasts, recipes, functions for a computer, and sensory stimulations.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the switching includes transfer of service properties.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein the first and second services are Web services, a service provided by the switching provider including a Web service.
10. The method of claim 1, where the switching criterion includes one or more selected from the group comprising: said first service provider is unavailable; the service provided by first service provider is degraded; the cost of the service provided by second service provider is less than the cost of the service provided by first service provider, the service provided by the second service provider has fewer advertisements, the service provided by second service provider is more secure.
11. The method of claim 1, where the switching criterion is determined based on a result of an auction system for providing said services.
12. The method of claim 1, where the switching criterion is determined based on a potential or predicted relative liability for providing said service.
13. The method of claim 1, where the switching criterion is determined based on one or more of: a relative ease of use for a plurality of users, a relative cognitive load or, the relative occurrence of SPAM.
14. The method of claim 1 where the switching provider comprises one selected from the group comprising: a third party, a provider of the first service, a provider of the second service, a provider of both services, a software agent running on the user's computer,

a service provider, a company, the government, a video or image content provider, an audio content provider, an insurance agency, a health care provider, an advertiser, a multimedia broadcaster or cable TV company, a game provider.

15. The method of claim 1, further including the step of enabling said switching service provider to generate a fee for switching services, said fee being dependent upon any one or more of: nature of information presented, amount of information presented, type of service, number of times switching is used, quality of service, and user satisfaction level.

16. The method of claim 15, further including the step of determining a user satisfaction level according to biometrics obtained from and concerning the user.

17. The method of claim 1, where the switching service is provided in a peer-to-peer file sharing system.

18. A system for real-time dynamic switching between a first service provider providing a service for users over a communications network and a second service provider, said system comprising:

- a means for establishing switching criterion for deciding when to switch service provision between said first service provider and second service provider;

- a means for monitoring said communications network for determining satisfaction of said switching criterion; and,

- a means for switching between first and second service provided over said communications network based on satisfaction of said switching criterion.

19. The system of claim 18, further comprising:

- a means maintaining state information associated with said user's use of said service provided by said first service provider; and,

- a means for migrating any state information maintained up to the time of switching to said second service, wherein the switching occurs in a manner substantially transparent to the user.

20. The system of claim 18, further comprising:

means for determining service fees to be charged by a switching service provider for providing said automatic switching; and,
means for communicating fee information to said user.

21. The system of claim 18, wherein said switching step c) is performed automatically without user knowledge.
22. The system of claim 18, wherein said switching step c) is performed at behest of a user or, upon a user providing approval for the switch when a switching criterion is satisfied.
23. The system of claim 18, wherein said user includes: an individual, or a group of individuals.
24. The system of claim 18, wherein said service provided to said users over a communications network includes a service for provisioning one or more of: text, multimedia content, images, broadcasts, recipes, functions for a computer, and sensory stimulations.
25. The system of claim 18, wherein the switching includes transfer of service properties.
26. The system of claim 18, wherein the first and second services are Web services, a service provided by the switching provider including a Web service.
27. The system of claim 18, where the switching criterion includes one or more selected from the group comprising: said first service provider is unavailable; the service provided by first service provider is degraded; the cost of the service provided by second service provider is less than the cost of the service provided by first service provider; the service provided by the second service provider has fewer advertisements; the service provided by second service provider is more secure; based on a result of an auction system for providing said services; based on a potential or predicted relative liability for providing said service; based on one or more of: a relative ease of use for a plurality of users, a relative cognitive load or, the relative occurrence of SPAM.

28. The system of claim 18, wherein the switching provider comprises one selected from the group comprising: a third party, a provider of the first service, a provider of the second service, a provider of both services, a software agent running on the user's computer, a service provider, a company, the government, a video or image content provider, an audio content provider, an insurance agency, a health care provider, an advertiser, a multimedia broadcaster or cable TV company, a game provider.

29. The system of claim 18, further including the step of enabling said switching service provider to generate a fee for switching services, said fee being dependent upon any one or more of: nature of information presented, amount of information presented, type of service, number of times switching is used, quality of service, and user satisfaction level.

30. The system of claim 29, further including the step of: means for obtaining biometric information relating to a user satisfaction level, said system including determining a fee for services according to biometrics obtained concerning the user.

31. A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for real-time dynamic switching between a first service provider providing a service for users over a communications network and a second service provider, said method steps including steps of:

- a) establishing switching criterion for deciding when to switch service provision between said first service provider and second service provider;
- b) monitoring said communications network for determining satisfaction of said switching criterion; and,
- c) switching between first and second service provided over said communications network based on satisfaction of said switching criterion.

32. The program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions as claimed in Claim 31, further including instructions for performing method steps of:

maintaining state information associated with said user's use of said service provided by said first service provider; and,

migrating any state information maintained up to the time of switching to said second service, wherein the switching occurs in a manner substantially transparent to the user.

33. The program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions as claimed in Claim 31, further including instructions for performing method steps of: establishing criterion for determining service fees to be charged by a switching service provider for providing said automatic switching; and, communicating fee information to said user.

34. The program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions as claimed in Claim 31, wherein the switching criterion includes one or more selected from the group comprising: said first service provider is unavailable; the service provided by first service provider is degraded; the cost of the service provided by second service provider is less than the cost of the service provided by first service provider; the service provided by the second service provider has fewer advertisements; the service provided by second service provider is more secure; based on a result of an auction system for providing said services; based on a potential or predicted relative liability for providing said service; based on one or more of: a relative ease of use for a plurality of users, a relative cognitive load or, the relative occurrence of SPAM.

35. The program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions as claimed in Claim 33, wherein the establishment of fees for switching services, is dependent upon any one or more of: nature of information presented, amount of information presented, type of service, number of times switching is used, quality of service, and user satisfaction level.